

KEEPING HEALTHY WHILE TRAVELING

Whether you are involved in international travel or just sightseeing within a country, you will encounter some conditions and situations that can affect your health and well being. Some of the discomfort they cause cannot be avoided; some can. In any event, remember that most countries do not have the high standards of hygiene and sanitation that are found in the United States. Here are a few of the more frequent "problem" areas.

Time Changes

Much of the international travel that is done today is by jet aircraft that traverse long distances in a minimum of time. The result is that the body is placed in a situation in which its functions are still proceeding on one schedule, yet it is expected to perform on a new one. For instance, travel to Europe results in about a six-hour time difference that places the dinner hour at about the time the body is expecting lunch, and bedtime arrives at the time the body is expecting to have dinner. Eventually, the body adjusts itself to the change, but in the meantime the person has a fatigue not only of the body but also of the mind; interests lag, attention suffers, and so forth. The cure for this condition is the tincture of time. The time required varies from one individual to the next and from a couple of days to a week or more. Until there has been opportunity for the body to adjust to this change, you should be cautious in making any serious decisions.

Motion Sickness

In the majority of instances, motion sickness would not occur if the person did not think about it. Children will usually develop it if they see an adult having trouble. If, however, you are one of the unlucky few who are cursed with it, it is possible to control it with drugs. Two of the more commonly used preparations are dramamine and bonine. Dramamine has a side effect that can be an advantage or disadvantage, depending on one's point of view. It causes drowsiness -- so for the individual who likes to party, it can definitely be a disadvantage. In the case of rambunctious children it becomes an advantage by helping to keep them out of the way. Bonine has the advantage of requiring only once-a-day dosage.

Body Changes

In the first few weeks that you are traveling or setting up residence in a new area, there are changes in body functions that occur because of change in the environment, foodstuffs, water, climate, etc. The most common are fatigue and diarrhea. Neither condition is particularly annoying or distressing, and both are short-lived. If the diarrhea is uncomfortable, that is, accompanied with pain or cramping, nausea or vomiting, or fever, then infection rather than change of environment is most likely the cause; and a physician should be consulted. Once the body becomes accustomed to the changes, the individual feels as usual.

Clothing And Dark Glasses

The choice of clothing for any area or for any travel should be made on the basis of what is suitable--not what is stylish. Improper clothing can lead to severe sunburn and even heat stroke; improper shoes can cause blisters. Clip-on dark glasses should never be used, as they permit glare to enter the eyes from the sides. It is far better to spend a little money and obtain dark glasses that have a prescription ground in. For those who wish to have color appear normal, a gray lens (G-15) is the one to choose as it does not distort color.

Eating Out

So long as you are traveling aboard an international carrier, there need be little concern about the quality of the food and water. However, when you are traveling or sightseeing through a foreign country or area, be sure that the food and water in restaurants are safe to eat and drink. The simplest rule is to eat only food served hot--nothing cold or raw. Because a food is cooked does not necessarily mean that it is safe--it could have been cooked three days before. However, if it is served hot, regardless of when prepared, it can be considered safe. Avoid the water, milk, and milk products; instead have hot tea or hot coffee without milk or cream, internationally known soft drinks, wine, or beer which is served from a previously unopened bottle.

First-Aid Kit

For those who plan to do much traveling, a first-aid kit is a fine companion. It need not be large but should contain some bandaids, adhesive tape, gauze bandage, gauze pads, Merthiolate or similar antispectic, aspirin, paregoric or other diarrhea medicine, an eye ointment, and other medical items necessary for the area of travel. Advice on specific first-aid supplies and medical aspects of travel may be obtained from the Office of Medical Services.